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ABSTRACT

Advantages to using the Internet to deliver instruction include the fact that Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) can be accessed on any computer, broadening the student base to anyone with an Internet browser and a PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) account. In addition, instructions, lectures, and examples can be linked together for use as students need them. In an effort to test Internet-based instruction, an entire English course was placed on the Internet at Arizona's Mesa Community College. The course offers students the opportunity for daily contact with the instructor through electronic mail or the telephone, research links at home, communication and discussion with the rest of the class, the ability to submit assignments remotely, and a unique opportunity to explore writing and literature of the world. One benefit of the course has been improved access to instructions and lectures than that provided by the college's existing computer English delivery system. In addition, the Internet has provided faster access, students do not need to fumble through lab manuals, and they can switch models of class delivery without missing anything. Electronic-mail performs a vital role in delivery of the course, allowing for communication between the instructor and students and a means of submitting and returning assignments. On a final evaluation of the course, positive comments were received with regard to increased flexibility, access, and instructor availability. Sample screenshots are included. (HAA)

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ED 407 006

DESIGNING A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM FOR DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS THROUGH THE INTERNET

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Biographical Sketch

Allen Bradshaw:

English Faculty - Mesa Community College
English Technology Coordinator
Computer English Coordinator
Chairman and Coordinator of Laptop/Internet Project
MCC Resource person for Internet curriculums
35 years in Education: High School (Dept. Chair 12 years) and Community College

Using the Internet to Deliver Curriculum

Philosophy:

1. HTML is a universal language that all computers can recognize. This means that any computer can now access the same material on the Internet, Mac or DOS. This allows the sending of curriculum to all students immediately. Basically, all a student would need to take the course remotely (other than a graphics based computer) is an Internet browser (students can be provided with NETSCAPE and Microsoft Explorer free), and a PPP account. This immediately broadens the base of the curriculum, and solves the problem of how to provide access to this type of curriculum delivery to students outside the immediate college campus.
2. Netscape's and MS Explorer's new mail system allows transfer of fully formatted files in a simple to use attachment feature, solving problems of delivery of assignments that plagues distance learning.
3. Any student can participate in this type of education. If a student does not have a computer, work can be completed in a college lab, library, or any other place that has Internet access.
4. Hyperlinks are a part of the WWW Internet. Special software, configurations, is not needed for the curriculum to work. Assignments, instructions, and lectures, and examples can be linked together and used as the student needs them.
5. This program could be offered world wide.

Curriculum Writing:

The test course that I used for designing Internet curriculum was English 102. The entire course, placed on the Internet, consists of 56 written documents, all linked together through 15 assignment sheets. Any document, lecture, exercise, etc. can be printed out from the Internet browser, Netscape. All assignments are designed so they can be submitted remotely, through e-mail. If you would like to view the course, the home page is:

http://ntserv1.mc.maricopa.edu/courses/eng102/eng102.htm

The curriculum is secured with a password beyond the initial home page. This is to provide some security for the instructor's lectures, etc., and other students using the materials without paying for the course. If you would like to see beyond the home page, e-mail me for the password.

The Internet Curriculum:

1. Offers daily contact with an instructor through e-mail and phone.
2. Offers research links at home through
   a. Links to the Library
   b. Links to the Internet and other libraries
3. Offers communication and discussion with the rest of the class
   a. Through e-mail
   b. Through EF bulletin board
4. Offers remote submission of assignments
5. Offers the student a unique opportunity to explore writing and literature of the world through the Internet.

Fringe Benefits:

One of the byproducts of this project is the discovery that the Internet is a far better delivery system of curriculum for the Computer English program from what we are currently using. It allows quicker access to instructions and lectures (from the computer lab, from the library, and from home), eliminates fumbling through

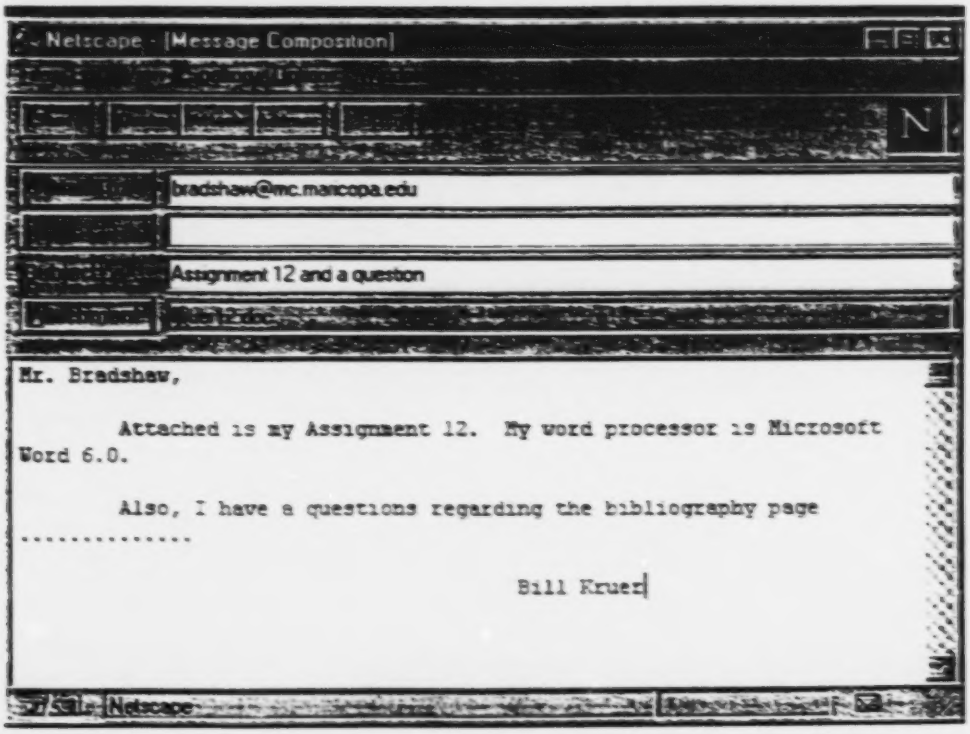
Computer Lab Manuals and Assignment manuals, and allows the flexibility for a student experiencing a life situation change to switch modes of class delivery without missing a beat. For example, a student in a classroom computer English 102 class has a job change and can no longer attend class. This student can continue in the TBA mode, with the same teacher, same curriculum coming from the Internet in the lab. The student will now attend lab at more convenient times to his/her own schedule. Or a student who moves out of town can continue the course via distance learning using the same curriculum on the Internet, communicating with the instructor and sending assignments by e-mail.

We currently offer Computer English 071, 101, and 217 curriculum for Internet delivery.

E-mail and sending Assignments:

E-mail is a vital part of delivering curriculum through the Internet. E-mail helps solve one of the weakest parts of the old independent study course: lack of communication between instructor and student. With e-mail, no longer does the instructor and a student have to rely on the telephone (leaving messages on answering machines) and U.S. Mail (slow). Internet e-mail allows information, questions, requests, additional instructions, etc. to reach both instructor and student almost instantly. In my courses, I check my e-mail several times a day, and usually can have an answer to a student's question back within a few hours.

Internet e-mail also solves the problem of submitting assignments. Through Internet e-mail attachments, students can send their assignments, rough drafts for help, and exercises. Instructors can grade the assignments and send them back to the student in the same manner.



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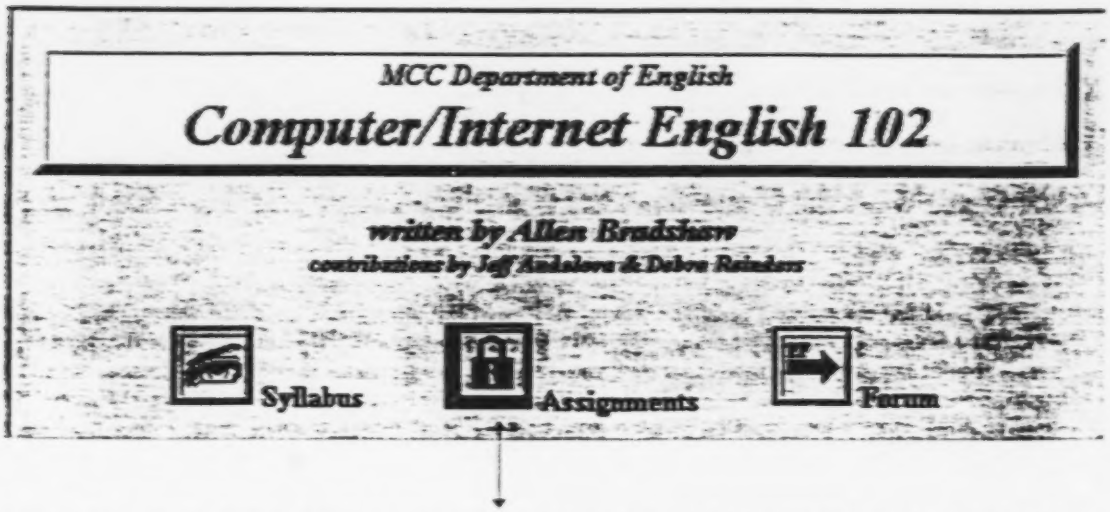
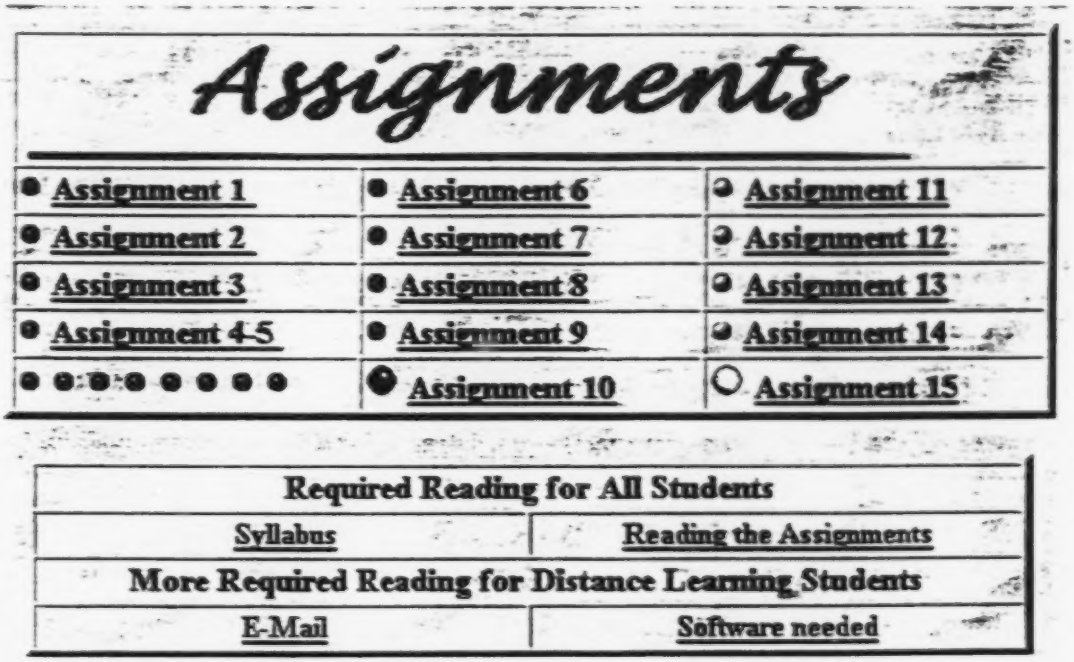
The English Internet Project:

The curriculum of each course is accessed from a course Internet homepage, which allows the student to read the syllabus, access the bulletin board for the class, and access the assignments for the course:





Each assignment page that is accessed will contain the assignment, links to all lectures and instructions, and links out onto the Internet for further information and resources.

Early Student Responses:

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Kathy Enzweiler
English 102-Internet

Final Evaluation

"Taking the course through the Internet was very interesting. It gave me the flexibility of working on the assignments whenever I wanted to. I have four kids and a husband who travels, so it is difficult for me to be confined to a classroom or lab setting. I did a lot of work on weekends when the kids had no homework or activities for me to drive to. ...

"As far as availability of the instructor, Mr. Bradshaw, it was better than a classroom setting except that we never communicated much in person. The great thing was that he could answer questions from his home, which allowed me to keep working at my odd hours. I was always amazed when I would e-mail a question at 10:00 at night and receive a response back the same night."

Bryan Cooper
English 102-Internet
Final Evaluation

"The Internet English class was quite an experience. It was fun, convenient and well structured. I decided to try this class because I work full time and live kind of far from work and MCC. When taking the computer English 101, I had difficulty getting to the lab because at the time I had an unpredictable schedule. Just before the semester began, I got promoted. This meant I would work the same hours every day. Those hours are five PM to one am. It was so nice to be able to get up and work on my homework. A lot of times, I worked on things when I got home from work. This is what is so great about this class. For some reason I could never sleep once I got home and I was full of ambition to get some work done. If I ran across any problems, all I had to do was look in the lectures that are online. If I still had a problem, I could drop Mr. Bradshaw a line on the e-mail. Another option would have been to e-mail another student. The communication lines were great."

Corinne Donkersley
English 102-Internet
Final Evaluation

"Well it's about time technology started working for the benefit of the student! Until now, computers have been those things you play on at the library to find the book you're looking for. Students shall suffer deprivation no longer! The pilot program installed for the Spring '96 semester at MCC has been a Godsend for me and many other hardworking students. Laptops, generously provided by the institution, have helped us in more ways than one. The words "alternative," "self-disciplining," and "multi-purposefully educational" only scratch the surface of the bonus effects of this ingenious teaching method.

"... Even though much time was spent surfing the Net for subjects irrelevant to academics, taking my English 102 class over the Internet definitely eased the burden of research papers. Knowing that I had an alternative to a pencil and paper type of learning environment gave me total incentive to reach for my full potential. It was also quite comfortable knowing that libraries, web sites, and research digests were at my bedside fingertips twenty-four hours a day."